

# Accommodation Strategy for Vulnerable Young People 2017 -2021



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# The Vision

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*Our vision is that by 2024 all disabled young people with eligible needs and all vulnerable young people will have access to targeted or supported housing which is appropriate to their needs.*

*The vision will be realised through strategic use of Herefordshire's existing housing resources and proactive housing development, aligned to social care priorities for children, young people and adults. This will be supported by a corporate commitment by the council and joined up working across council directorates and with partner organisations.*

*Safe, decent and affordable housing is recognised as providing a vital foundation for young people as they become economically active young adults. This strategy will support people to become more independent in finding and sustaining their own home in the future.*

# Part A The Strategic Approach to Accommodation

## 1. Young people's housing

This accommodation strategy is part of a wider approach to the housing needs of young people. This wider approach will also include managing the risk of homelessness among young people who do not belong to a specific vulnerable group. This is not part of the accommodation strategy and will be addressed through a new action plan under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. Accommodation and homelessness prevention are being addressed separately because;

- They are subject to different law and if managed together, complexity can arise as to the council's different obligations. The law provides no specific protection for young people over 18 with no particular vulnerability.
- An accommodation approach focused on delivering supported housing provides much more dependable long term housing solutions for groups of vulnerable young people.
- The homelessness prevention strategy already provides a strategic framework for addressing the needs of young people at risk of homelessness. This can be aligned appropriately to the Early Help Strategy within the Children and Young People's Plan.

By developing realistic accommodation options for young people, the council aims to prevent crises from occurring as homelessness and demand for housing related support increases. Care leavers can face difficulties both in finding and keeping accommodation. To be successful they need access to support to live independently, to replace the financial and practical support often offered by a family. It is extremely difficult for a young person to gain and sustain employment or to enter education without a stable home, so that their achievement and wellbeing are significantly compromised.

Across the whole population, it is recognised that along with family and social life and education or employment, a safe and stable home is essential to maintaining mental health and wellbeing. Affordability is a key issue and a real barrier to accessing accommodation for those adults over 25 or who are not protected. It is crucial to support disabled young people and care leavers to have the best possible start as they transition into adulthood. Without effective accommodation solutions for these groups, some are at significant risk of homelessness and rough sleeping or of institutional care. Each of these risks would result in poor outcomes for their wellbeing and life chances.

## 2. Housing Pathways for Young People

These are being developed as part of the wider strategic approach to young people's housing and two pathways will support this accommodation strategy;

- Housing pathway for looked after children and care leavers
- Housing pathway for disabled young people with significant/eligible needs.

There will be appropriate intersection with the homelessness pathway.

The council will adopt the model set out in "Developing positive pathways to adulthood" originated by St. Basil's in Birmingham. The model supports young people on their journey to economic independence and success through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention. The pathway recognises that safe, decent and affordable housing underpins achievement of other positive outcomes – whether these relate to education, training, employment, health or safer communities.

In order to mitigate risk the 5 service areas in the framework support:

1. Information and advice for young people and families;
2. Early intervention and help;
3. Integrated response led by Housing and Children's Services;
4. Commissioned accommodation and support;
5. Range of housing options taking into account low incomes of young people.

This strategy supports moving from crisis response to planning for transitions.



### 3. Strategic Objectives and Progress achieved so far

The objectives articulate the core purpose of the strategy and under each sit target outcomes, through which the success of the strategy can be measured. The objectives also align to key actions which were adopted in 2016/17 and significant work has been taken already and continues to implement these actions.

**3.1** Fully utilise all the targeted and supported housing available for disabled young people;

#### Progress so far

- Vacancies in existing contracted supported living services, suitable for transitioning young adults were reviewed in 2016 and matched provisionally to the needs of individuals. Around five vacancies were identified at two schemes in Hereford.
- Transitions team completed assessments or reviews of individuals. Some placements have now been completed successfully and others are in progress but delayed in relation to one scheme.
- A review of potential vacancies across a wider portfolio of supported living schemes is now being concluded to identify further potential capacity for transitioning young people.

#### Target Outcomes

- Implementation of new arrangements for review and placement of individuals to fill all void places in the supported housing portfolio.
- All vacant places in contracted supported living schemes for learning disabled people fully utilised by October 2017.

3.2 Ensure appropriate and economic accommodation for all disabled young people transitioning with verified accommodation need in the period to 2021.

#### Progress so far

- A new corporate commitment to housing for vulnerable people
- New build apartments at Whitecross School will now feature up to 10 places for learning disabled people with moderate to high needs and around five of these can be earmarked for young people transitioning.
- Aspire Living has now identified two potential premises for acquisition to create six new places for learning disabled young adults with moderate to high needs. These will be available by April 2018.
- An agreement with Herefordshire Housing (HHL) will generate up to 38 new targeted housing units to 2021, of which eight will be earmarked for transitioning young people.
- Consideration is being given to reserving around seven council owned small sites for development of supported housing for vulnerable people.

#### Target Outcomes

- No fewer than five transitioning young learning disabled people accommodated at the Whitecross school development around April 2018
- Three transitioning young people with moderate to high personal care needs accommodated in shared housing acquired by Aspire from around April 2018
- Three transitioning young people with moderate challenging behaviour needs accommodated in shared housing acquired by Aspire from around April 2018
- A range of different accommodation for eight transitioning disabled people secured through the HHL disposal agreement
- Supported housing for transitioning learning disabled people secured on 1 new small site developed in partnership with land provided by the council

3.3 Ensure that the provision of contracted housing for vulnerable young people is targeted to LAC and care leavers.

#### Progress so far

- The contract with Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP), part of WM Housing has been reviewed and renegotiated in detail. 50% of the capacity over three foyer sites is now reserved specifically for LAC and care leavers and subject to direct nomination by Children's Wellbeing
- This represents an increase of up to 15 places for these priority groups which will be implemented during 2017
- The SHYPP contract will be reviewed by September 2017, along with the Supported Housing for Aftercare (SHAC) service, to determine how the services will be re-procured from 2018

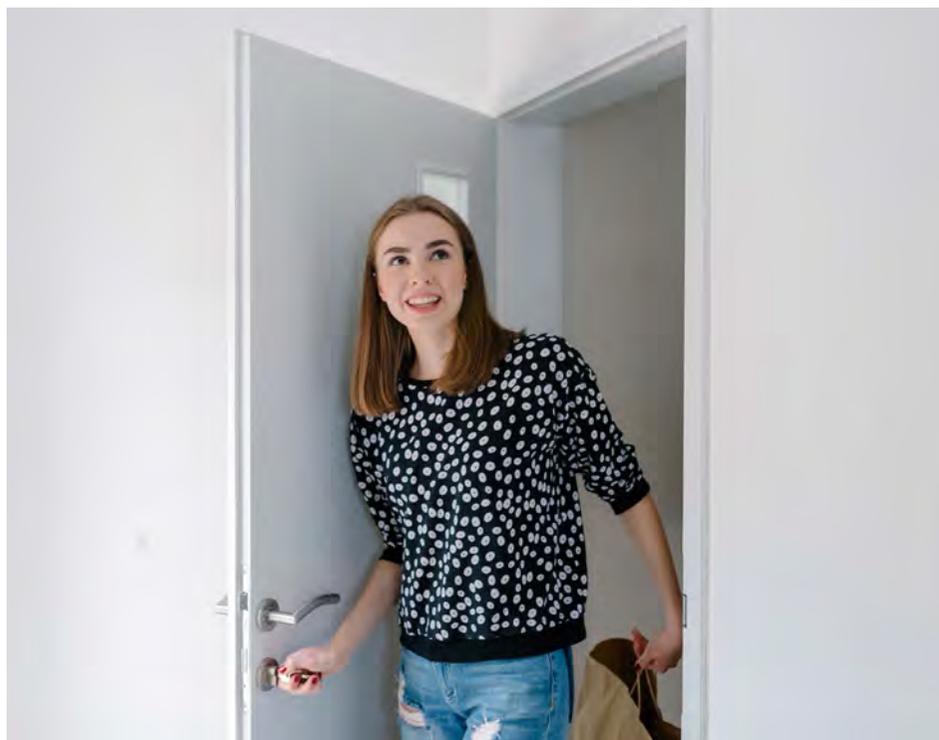
#### Target Outcomes

- 15 supported housing places for care leavers with moderate needs available on a continuing basis.
- Housing related support for those 15 care leavers re-procured and operating safely and consistently from 2018.

## Real Housing Stories

*Looked after children (LAC) – moving onto SHYPP as my only option, need to go as my foster placement is too restrictive. Did start to talk about at 16 so I feel prepared. Foster placement hasn't supported independent living skills.*

*SHYPP - When I first moved in, I looked at the staff as authority figures...so I got warnings and was nearly kicked out. But then I started to realise they were only helping me transition into adulthood. But only some of them! They got me running again, they gave me the opportunity to play football week in, week out. We attempted cooking sessions on a regular basis. I was living with mates as well, so I had daily contact which helped my mood.*



**3.4** Ensure provision of sufficient and appropriate new supported housing for UASC including UASC care leavers.

## Progress so far

- Three UASC have been accommodated in supported housing since January 2017.
- Agreement has been reached with Shropshire Housing Group for the provision of three further shared houses, accommodating nine more UASC. The first of these houses will be ready for occupation in August 2017.
- A protocol has been established for the provision of licence agreements for LAC UASC occupants of supported housing and detailed cost modelling has been completed for supporting UASC over the age of 18.
- Specialist housing related support for UASC was commissioned from an independent provider and the options for providing such support to the growing cohort of UASC are now being reviewed.
- Shared accommodation is only part of the solution in accommodating UASC. Some young people will be accommodated in foster care and supported lodgings.

## Target Outcomes

- A total of 12 UASC and UASC care leavers accommodated in shared housing by December 2017
- Seamless management of legalities of occupation when UASC reach 18 years, subject to the operation of immigration law.
- A redesigned and costed model for provision of housing related support to UASC in shared housing ready for implementation.

**3.5** Ensure availability of sufficient targeted and supported housing to accommodate all care leavers with significant or urgent accommodation need appropriately and economically by 2021.

#### Progress so far

- An agreement around disposals with Herefordshire Housing will create up to 38 new units of targeted housing, of which around 15 will be available for care leavers commencing in 2020.
- Proposals are in hand to earmark up to seven council owned small sites for development of supported housing for vulnerable people.
- Supported housing for young people has been identified as a priority in the delivery of housing as part of the new corporate development partnership.
- Capital budget has been identified for purchase of at least one 4 bedroom house and a property search is in hand

#### Target Outcomes

- A new corporate commitment to housing vulnerable young people
- Availability of a range of targeted and supported housing in different locations and to meet the diverse support needs of care leavers.
- No care leaver is required to have a homelessness assessment
- The housing needs of all care leavers are met appropriately and safely in Herefordshire
- Care leavers are able to manage their own housing needs and sustain a tenancy by the age of 25

**3.6** Avoid costs in the provision of accommodation of disabled young people and care leavers by placing people in supported housing rather than specialist residential accommodation, so contributing to achievement of Medium Term Financial Savings (MTFS) targets.

#### Progress so far

- A range of different accommodation secured through the new build targeted housing under the HHL disposal agreement, including move-on accommodation for more independent care leavers.
- Supported housing for care leavers secured on 2 new small sites developed in partnership with land provided by the council.
- 9 or more new units of supported accommodation created for care leavers through acquisition by the council of shared houses.
- Placement of individual transitioning young people to vacant places in contracted supported housing so avoiding limited costs.
- Identified further transitioning young people suitable for supported housing
- Reviewed and confirmed the full portfolio of under utilised supported housing for learning disabled people.
- Allocated dedicated staffing to ensure the utilisation of supported housing for learning disabled people, including transitioning young people.

#### Target Outcomes

- All vacant places in contracted supported living schemes for learning disabled people fully utilised by October 2017
- Review and placement arrangements in place in adult social care to ensure placement of transitioning young disabled people as soon as suitable places are available
- Average costs avoided for individuals placed per annum remain within the range £11k to £14k

**3.7** Establish and implement models of supported housing for disabled young people, care leavers and UASC which are diverse, sustainable and promote independence and choice.

#### Progress so far

- Consultation with learning disabled people and care leavers about their needs and aspirations and the challenges they face in relation to housing.
- Piloting of a supported shared housing model for UASC, utilising directly managed accommodation and an independent support provider.
- Draft models of housing tenure, management and support delivery for learning disabled adults.

#### Target Outcomes

- Disabled young people and their families able to choose from a menu of supported housing models reflecting variety of tenure and management of housing and care/support, subject to availability of suitable accommodation.
- Supported housing models to include options enabling family carers to manage the care and support provided.
- A variety of tenures and support options which allow care leavers to move on and manage more independently when they are ready, subject to availability of accommodation.

#### Real Housing Stories

- *WISH LIST - more independent living properties so when you are learning it is more like real life and not like a prison*
- *I have just had to ask about other accommodation options now and I am 17. Social services would like me to stay in my foster placement until I'm 21 - but think that is because it is cheaper than putting me up in my own place.*

**3.8** Ensure that there are clear, robust and flexible arrangements in operation to ensure that the housing needs of disabled children and their families are met.

#### Progress so far

- The accessible homes register and its operation was reviewed in 2016, along with arrangements for assessing the housing needs of disabled people.
- A new customer journey for disabled people requiring accessible housing was agreed and is operational.
- Housing development team continued to find customised solutions for disabled children with complex needs and their families. Solutions were found for several such families in 2016/17.

## 4. Key Principles

The following principles underpin the young people's accommodation strategy and its implementation;

- 4.1 Ensuring that LAC and care leavers have safe and appropriate accommodation is one of the council's duties as corporate parent
- 4.2 Supported housing will generally provide outcomes for most disabled people which are better and more economic than residential care
- 4.3 There will be no homelessness assessment of care leavers required in order to identify housing suitable for them
- 4.4 Young adults brought up in the family home no longer have a realistic expectation of living independently of their family before the age of 24. Application of this principle to disabled young adults will be varied only where there is a tangible risk of breakdown of care and support
- 4.5 Accommodation, care and support will be provided in such ways as to promote the independence of care leavers and enable them to move on to different accommodation when appropriate
- 4.6 The legal status of young people's occupation of housing will be appropriate to their age, their capacity and the nature of accommodation
- 4.7 The provision of accommodation to individual young people is subject to the associated care and support package being cost effective
- 4.8 The council will resolve the housing needs of young people pragmatically through joined up working across directorates and services



## 5. Overview of Risks

	Risk	Mitigation
National policy change; Supported housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data quality and demonstrating demand and future need</li> <li>• Loss of confidence across housing development, management and care markets in future funding</li> </ul>	New dedicated staffing to address data quality, projected future need and reassure all markets
Accommodation assets linked to existing support contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of specialist accommodation</li> <li>• Reliance on specific providers</li> </ul>	Review of existing contracts and renegotiation or re-procurement
Under utilisation of supported living services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed outcomes for individuals.</li> <li>• Not meeting MTFS target</li> </ul>	Renewed project approach to drive full utilisation through targeted reviewing and matching to anticipated vacancies
Cost effectiveness of support for care leavers and UASC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High unit costs and reduced potential for savings over time</li> </ul>	Review of options during Summer 2017 leading to new approaches
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care leavers becoming homeless owing to insufficiency of supported housing</li> <li>• Legislative reform may change the age limits</li> </ul>	High priority accorded under allocations policy  Joined up approach to complex cases
National policy on housing affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care leavers unable to afford housing once over 25, especially where economically inactive</li> </ul>	Increased development of more shared housing for young adults in tandem with developers and landlords

## 6. Scope of the Strategy; Who is it for?

6.1 The strategy is focused primarily on three priority groups of vulnerable young people approaching and reaching adulthood.

Disabled young people with significant needs transitioning to adulthood

Care leavers over 18 and some LAC approaching 18

UASC who are LAC and former UASC who become care leavers

The first group is somewhat distinct from the other two and generally presents with very different needs. However, some disabled young people are also looked after and so will become care leavers. UASC share many circumstances with wider care leavers and LAC.

6.2 The strategy has an additional and narrow focus on disabled children and their families. This is a very different group where the needs are not for supported housing but an accessible home where the parents can continue to support the child in more suitable accommodation. Unlike in the remainder of the strategy the accommodation secured is typically social or private rented housing.

6.3 The accommodation strategy does not address the needs of young people who are not looked after or care leavers and without significant disability needs. For young people outside these groups accommodation need may be addressed by the council in two ways. In identifying the housing needs of the county's population under s8 of the Housing Act 1985, the council will take account of the needs of young people. Herefordshire's Homelessness Prevention Strategy identified as a priority preventing and relieving homelessness among young people. A new action plan is now being developed to ensure effective provision and responses for this group, especially in the light of recent changes in welfare policy.

6.4 The strategy addresses the needs of the two different population groups set out in 5.1 somewhat differently in two strands. The needs of LAC and care leavers are similar whether or not they are UASC. The needs of young people raise different requirements in targeted and supported accommodation. However, both groups' needs are subject to similar timelines and so have been addressed using the same three phase approach set out below.

## 7. A phased approach to delivering accommodation

7.1 The strategy adopts a three phase approach to developing and providing accommodation for young people. This reflects the capacity to some extent to predict accommodation need for disabled young people and care leavers in advance. It also recognises that whilst some potential capacity in the system can be released quickly, real expansion in the availability of accommodation requires new house building or "development". Typically housing development takes at least three to four years and sometimes much longer.

### 7.2 Phase 1 - 2017

Phase 1 involves making best use of existing contracts for supported housing and ensuring the accommodation they provide is most effectively utilised.

For transitioning young disabled people that means identifying vacant or "void" places in contracted supported housing and ensuring that they are filled quickly and by someone whose needs can be appropriately met there.

Phase 1 also requires the development of coherent models of housing management and care and support delivery for young learning disabled adults.

For care leavers and LAC phase 1 involves ensuring that contracted housing related support services will accept them and that the council has direct nomination rights to the accommodation. Currently this is focused on the council's contract with SHYPP, operated by WM Housing.

For UASC this phase covers the period of first arrivals of UASC into shared housing and so the council must ensure that the accommodation is available on time, appropriate support is commissioned and that legal and financial issues are addressed.

- Up to 5 places in supported accommodation will be utilised for transitioning young disabled people during this phase.
- A minimum of 15 supported housing places for care leavers/LAC will be confirmed during this phase
- Shared housing will be provided for six UASC during this period.

### **7.3 Phase 2 - 2017/18**

Phase 2 takes advantage of new housing development which was planned some time ago and is now coming available. It requires Housing Development to renegotiate with developers and housing providers. This phase also sees the council securing new accommodation relatively quickly through acquisition rather than new development.

For transitioning disabled young people the main development already in the pipeline is that at Whitecross school in Hereford which is expected to be available from around April 2018. Proposals for acquisition during this period involve Aspire Living acquiring properties.

For care leavers and LAC this period sees the freeing up of places at the SHYPP foyers in Hereford, Ross and Leominster. The council will consider direct acquisition of houses for shared accommodation and this will be subject to governance and the availability of vacant suitable properties.

For UASC, Phase 2 features the building up of UASC numbers to meet the target agreed with the Home Office. It also involves managing the needs and complicated legal permutations affecting former UASC who have reached the age of 18. The council is negotiating with social housing providers to meet needs in this phase through shared three bedroom houses.

- Around 11 new units for transitioning young disabled people would be established during this phase, augmented by a small number of vacancies occurring in existing services
- Up to 11 new supported places for care leavers can be created through council acquisition of properties
- Supported housing will be provided for 9 further UASC during this phase

### **7.4 Phase 3 - 2019 to 2024**

Phase 3 involves new build through housing development. At this stage the council is pursuing options which will serve either or both the main groups of young people, care leavers and those transitioning young disabled people.

The main initiatives offering potential for new accommodation for young people from 2019 are;

- Schemes enabled by the council's agreement with HHL on disposals
- Schemes offering affordable or social housing through s106 agreements or "planning gain". These can be negotiated to include supported housing
- Small schemes as part of larger scale developments under the council's new Strategic Development Partnership being procured in 2017
- Small scale acquisition of shared housing on a "purchase and repair" or similar model
- Any other development opportunities which can be achieved through the council's corporate commitment to providing housing for vulnerable people. This might include allocation of land sites

Each of these routes to building or acquiring new accommodation involves inevitable uncertainty around planning processes, negotiation with developers and providers and other issues. For this reason any projected numbers and timescales can only be estimates and will be subject to continual review and analysis in implementing the strategy.

- Up to 51 new units of accommodation may be created for care leavers in this period
- Up to 40 further units of supported accommodation will be established for transitioning young disabled people during phase 3



## Overview of needs and planned delivery

A detailed analysis of accommodation need is set out in Part C and is summarised below, alongside projection of new housing delivery.

The needs data currently available provides a snapshot for 2017 and estimates of accommodation required from 2019 are based on this current picture. They will therefore require robust review and analysis over time.

	Care Leavers	UASC	Disabled People
<b>Phase 1 – 2017</b>			
Projected need	15	6	3
Planned delivery	15	6	5
<b>Phase 2 – 2017-18</b>			
Projected need	18	9	13
Planned delivery	11	9	13
<b>Phase 3 – 2019-2024</b>			
Projected need	55	15	45
Planned delivery	51	15	40

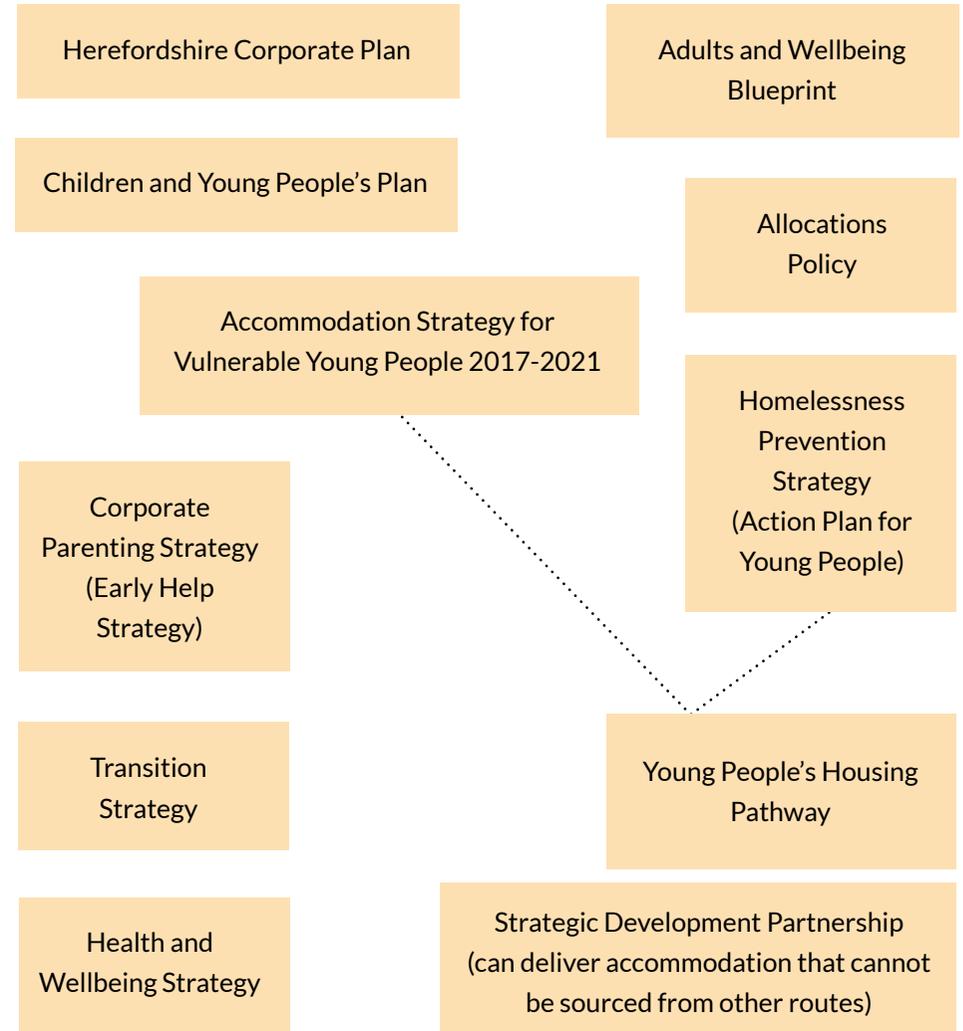
# Part B Policy and Context

## 8. Council commitment to housing for vulnerable young people

**8.1** The council has made a significant commitment to providing safe, accessible and appropriate housing for key groups of vulnerable people. It is proposed to adopt a corporate approach to ensuring the availability of targeted or supported housing for vulnerable people, including those groups who are the focus of this strategy. This will help the council fulfil its objectives in the Corporate Plan, including enabling people to live safe, healthy and independent lives, whilst also contributing to the health of the economy. The Interim Housing Strategy for Herefordshire identifies the housing needs of care leavers and young people generally as a priority.

**8.2** The council's Corporate Parenting Strategy places significant emphasis on the housing and accommodation needs of care leavers and looked after children. This is reinforced by Herefordshire's Children and Young people's Plan. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Herefordshire identifies children and young people as a main priority and the contribution of good housing to health and wellbeing is emphasised throughout.

**8.3** The strategy will help to deliver priorities identified in the Children and Young People's Plan and the Adults Wellbeing Plan. It represents effective joint working across two directorates and two strategic approaches. The approaches in the strategy are consistent with reducing demand on formal and specialist care set out in the Adults Wellbeing Blueprint and Early Help Strategy for children and families.



## **9. Context; the Law and national policy**

### **9.1 Care Act 2014**

The provision of suitable accommodation is integral so social care and health care and included within assessments.

### **9.2 The Children Act 1989**

Accommodation for children in need over 16 where necessary (s20). Also provision for care leavers. Provisions also encompasses UASC who are subject to Immigration Acts additionally. Staying Put Guidance 2013 allows young people to remain in foster care up to the age of 21.

**9.3 Valuing People Now:** three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities. National policy promoting personal independence and choice, social equality and dignity. Also Building the Right Support, national policy for Transforming Care.

### **9.4 Children and Social Work Act 2017**

All care leavers will be entitled to support until the age of 25. The local authority must provide advice and information to promote the educational achievement of every child who has been looked after.

### **9.5 The Children and Families Act 2004**

Transforming services and support for disabled young people and those with special educational needs so as to consistently ensure the best outcomes for them. Also promotes participation of parent carers in decision making and extends some provision until age 25.

### **9.6 Housing Act 1996 (Parts VII and V)**

Duties of housing authorities with respect to allocations, homelessness and threatened homelessness. As amended now extends priority need to LAC and care leavers in various categories.

### **9.7 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (implementation in 2018)**

Promotes early intervention by extending the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days. Care leavers granted a local connection.

### **9.8 Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000**

Promoting the life chances of LAC and care leavers by delaying discharge from care until they are ready and improve assessment, planning and preparation. Also improves personal support and financial arrangements for care leavers.

# Part C Needs Analysis

## 10. Overview of needs

10.1 The table below provides a summary of the main cohorts of young people encompassed by the strategy. The figures for care leavers are likely to include small numbers of LAC over 16. However, this represents a snapshot of the needs of current cohorts and only the start of a projection of future need. There is a particular challenge in identifying which young people, whose housing needs are now met, will require accommodation from 2019. With regard to care leavers, there are additional challenges in predicting future need with confidence. The Children and Social Care Act 2017 has become law without any clarity as to how and when it will be implemented, leaving some doubt as to the extent of the council's duty to some cohorts of care leavers.

	Care Leavers	UASC	Disabled People
Immediate Need (6 months)	11	6	3
Specific Need (12 months)	9	9	3
Future need or post education	9	15	10
Housing needs currently met	89	6	69
Review required (data quality issues)	24	0	13
Total			

## 11. Consultation and engagement

11.1 Widespread engagement with care leavers and LAC is undertaken routinely through and on behalf of Herefordshire's Corporate Parenting Panel. This has encompassed some housing related issues. In April 2017 specific consultation was undertaken with a group of care leavers and looked after children about their housing needs and aspirations.

11.2 Questionnaires were sent to all professionals to capture data from Young People including the 16+ and LAC teams in February 2017. Fourteen questionnaires were returned from 16 to 25 year olds. The three most popular types of accommodation to aspire to in the next two years are: social housing, private rented and housing with support. Five of those responding had been homeless. The main barriers to moving into their own accommodation were: affordability, lack of confidence with independent living skills, needing to find someone to share with and convictions.

Those who responded were currently receiving support from social services, mental health team, learning disabilities or probation. Two responses were also received via the Local Offer from people seeking to live independently but with close support networks. They identified life skills training as the highest priority.

## Real Housing Stories

*"I always knew that I wanted to move back to Hereford into Independent Living (because I had mastered my skills when I was in foster care – just knew what it would take to live on your own). I chose to go back to live with my mum as it was the quickest option to get back to live in Hereford.*

*Living with mum didn't work so my 16+ worker gave me some options... I wanted my own flat but...they thought I needed the extra support - I wanted my own flat because I have the ability to take care of my own flat but I went along with it because I didn't have a choice.*

*So I am now being asked by my corporate parents; where would I like to live, what support I might need, how will you help me; like you would for your own...*

- *We know there aren't a lot of placements in Hereford for young people in general – we don't mind waiting; we just want to be listened to and not lied to.*
- *I always knew I needed to show that I had the skills to live independently; this is what we are told we need to have if we want to live independently – then you move the goal posts, because it is in our best interests.*
- *We want a chance to have control of something in our lives, we aren't saying we don't want your support, we just want to feel normal.*
- *When you talk about treating us like we are your own children – you let them make mistakes, take risks – why can't we; oh because we are vulnerable.*

11.3 During autumn 2016, there was consultation over accommodation and housing needs with 20 learning disabled people. This generated a vivid picture of people's aspirations and priorities and some practical barriers. Further such consultation is now being planned with young learning disabled adults who are transitioning to adulthood.

The council's transitions team engages in depth with all disabled young people and their families in developing transition plans and exploring care and support options. This continual engagement informs the analysis of housing need in this document.

In order to inform and shape the implementation of the accommodation strategy the council will embark upon a programme of regular consultation and engagement with young disabled people, care leavers and UASC.

## 12. Looked After Children (LAC)

12.1 The numbers of LAC requiring supported housing rather than foster care or supported lodgings are small. Specific analysis is now being undertaken to identify any particular patterns which will allow for needs to be predicted in more detail.

### **13. Care Leavers**

13.1 There are approximately 145 young adults identified as care leavers in Herefordshire and around 20 or 14% have significant or urgent housing need. Others are appropriately housed currently but will need to move onto a different kind of accommodation in due course. There is a range of needs across the care leaver population which require different levels of support in response. Typically but not necessarily, as people get older they can manage more independently and with less support.

13.2 Accommodation need among care leavers falls broadly into three areas;

- targeted accommodation with limited support
- supported accommodation with more consistent levels of support
- specialist placements providing intensive support for individuals with complex needs relating to mental or physical ill health, offending or risk taking behaviour

Other than where a specialist placement is required care leavers will be accommodated either in shared accommodation, typically 3 bedroom houses or in “foyer” type supported housing. Foyers may utilise a mix of bedsits and one bedroom flats.

13.3 Many of those who can manage with little or no support are older young people who are moving on and need help finding safe and affordable accommodation. Care leavers have sometimes encountered difficulties in acquiring social housing via the allocations system. Whilst not required by the allocations policy, some young people when applying for housing are frustrated by homelessness assessments. These can be an obstacle, particularly for those with behaviour or offending related needs.

### **14. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)**

14.1 By 2018, Herefordshire will need to accommodate approximately 12 UASC in shared and/or supported accommodation. These will all be minors and will need some level of support to be shared between three occupants. It is anticipated that an initial level of support during an assessment and familiarisation phase will subsequently be able to taper off, so reducing costs.

14.2 In addition, the council will need to provide housing for up to 10 former UASC care leavers, often for fairly short periods. They will also be accommodated in shared housing, typically three bedroom houses. Levels of support required would usually be low. Duties to accommodate UASC once they reach 18 are very complicated, depending on their legal status, despite them generally being care leavers. Duties arise under different legislation in different circumstances.

### **15. Disabled young people transitioning to adulthood**

15.1 There is a cohort of approximately 100 disabled young people with significant needs between the ages of 15 and 21 who are going through the transition process. The great majority of that group are safely accommodated, mostly with family, including almost all those under 19. There is a range of needs including those with high personal care needs, some with challenging behaviour and people requiring high levels of care.

15.2 Traditionally, many of this group would have had their needs met in the long run in residential care. Now, over time, many of the total cohort will move in to supported accommodation, with a very few requiring residential care.

15.3 However, it may not be necessary or appropriate for people to move into supported accommodation for some time. Since non disabled young people are not likely to be able to live independent of their families in the first years of adulthood, neither is this a realistic expectation for disabled young people. This approach is prone to challenge by some families, particularly those of young people who have been attending residential colleges out of county. Some families are reluctant for their offspring to return to their full time care after college.

15.4 In considering accommodation options for disabled young people, some people increasingly wish to share perhaps a three bedroom house with one or two others. Some individuals and their families may prefer individual flats with their own front door but varying levels of care and support available on site. For people with more complex needs, there is sometimes expectation of dedicated housing and care for one person but this would often prove uneconomic for the council and can lead to social isolation.

## **16. Disabled children and their families**

16.1 There has been no recent survey or analysis of housing need among disabled children under 16 and their families. However, demand for housing among this group is monitored through the accessible homes process. As children become older, the family will need accommodation that is more accessible, flexible and with more facilities. The appropriate response therefore involves accessible housing which begins with an occupational therapy assessment and considers;

- adaptation of the existing family home via Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)
- availability of suitable accessible accommodation in social housing stock
- customised new build or converted housing

16.2 Each year, customised housing development is carried out for a small number of families, typically where a disabled child has complex needs. Housing Development will work with social care and health providers to provide housing which is most appropriate and flexible to respond to the family's needs over time.



# Part D Resources Implications

## 17. General Financial Implications

**17.1** A substantial increase in the supply and utilisation of supported housing for young people is generally expected to yield savings in social care spending for both adults and children. This is incorporated into the council's MTFs savings plans. In many cases, without the option of supported housing for care leavers or young disabled people, the council has to arrange residential care or very expensive specialist placements.

**17.2** For the majority of individuals, supported housing is a cheaper option and offers better outcomes for the young person. In most cases, the availability of supported housing allows the council to avoid a proportion of costs.

**17.3** There is no automatic revenue cost implication from developing new supported housing as this is borne by developers and providers. However, the council may underwrite the cost of voids in accommodation for the landlord in order to secure exclusive nomination rights.

**17.4** Generally, the development of new supported housing can be achieved without any capital spending by the council. However it retains a small capability to invest in conversion or even acquisition of properties where the market cannot supply on its own.

**17.5** Once built and earmarked for supported housing, accommodation represents a significant community asset which can be difficult to replace. Changes to care and support contracts can sometimes place that asset at risk, so threatening supply of accommodation.

**17.6** Provision of supported housing for UASC involves similar analysis of support cost variables as for care leavers. However, the income picture is quite different and when it comes to former UASC care leavers, profoundly complex and uncertain.

## 18. Savings; Transitioning young disabled people

**18.1** Savings can be achieved for adult social care from placing more transitioning disabled people in supported accommodation, rather than residential care. This will be in the form of costs avoided, rather than cashable savings as generally the young person is living in with family or elsewhere. This potential saving applies to a broad group of disabled people with moderate needs, around 65% of the total. The cost avoided is the difference between a residential placement and the supported living support.

**18.2** It is calculated that the average net cost avoided on annual support costs is £13k. The accommodation strategy proposes gains for this user group as follows;

- 11 new units of accommodation supplied in 2017/18, providing annual costs avoided from 2018/19 of £143k
- 14 further units of accommodation supplied in 2019/21, providing additional annual costs avoided of £182k
- A total of 25 new units providing £325k costs avoided by 2021/22

**18.3** Where a young disabled adult takes up supported housing in a vacancy where the council already pays for support through a block or consolidated contract, all of the costs will be avoided. Those costs depend upon need and will be in a range between £22k and £40k.

If 5 current vacancies in such accommodation are allocated to transitioning young disabled people by 2019, with an average cost of care and support of £31k, additional costs of £155k will be avoided.

**18.4** The council may opt to underwrite void costs in newly developed supported housing for disabled young people. Costs of rent and management charge vary considerably but will seldom exceed 15% of care and support costs. Further modelling is required to project accurately net costs avoided incorporating void cover, across the future portfolio of supported housing.

## **19. Savings; LAC and Care Leavers**

**19.1** Savings achieved by providing supported and targeted accommodation for many more care leavers and some LAC will include a mixture of cashable savings and costs avoided. Some, particularly older individuals will be moving from expensive specialist placements whilst new care leavers often will not. The level of saving depends on the level of support required and how it is commissioned and provided. More detailed modelling is under way to enable specific budget planning and support delivery of MTFs savings targets. There are three main support scenarios for care leavers, each with different cost profiles;

- Support can be provided solely by the Post 16s team so with no additional cost
- Support is provided partly through a housing provider as housing related support with additional cost
- Support is provided by a specialist leaving care agency often at very high hourly rates. Currently, placements also involve accommodation being provided by the support agency at premium additional cost

**19.2** The only local accommodation with housing related support is provided by SHYPP and this contract has been renegotiated to ensure support for care leavers. Currently the costs to the council are relatively modest because a significant element of cost has been shifted to enhanced housing benefit. This is unlikely to be sustainable within the new funding regime for supported housing.

**19.3** It is proposed to review the options for commissioning and delivering specialist support to care leavers in supported housing, along with appropriate cost modelling. Options should include block contracting to achieve more economic pricing and delivery of the service in-house by Children's wellbeing.

## **20. Housing for Disabled Children and Families**

The specific housing needs of younger disabled children and their families are met through social housing or adaptations to private sector housing. This is often supported by Disabled Facilities Grant provided by the Government, sometimes augmented by the council's capital spending. There are no revenue funding implications for the council in providing such housing solutions for disabled children.

## **21. Financial Implications of UASC**

**21.1** The council receives specific funding to support UASC and shared housing is one of the means by which the council discharges its responsibilities to them. The cost of support in shared housing is related to need so unpredictable although generally expected to taper off over time. The future management and projection of support costs is subject to the same review and modelling work envisaged for care leavers.

**21.2** The costs of the UASC housing itself falls directly upon the council as it does not generally for care leavers. This is because UASC are under 18. For many former UASC care leavers, the welfare system will not meet the costs of accommodation owing to issues of legal status. Income to the council to support UASC care leavers is also unpredictable.

**21.3** Detailed cost modelling and analysis of risk is being undertaken in relation to UASC and will be reported during 2017.

# Part E Risks and Barriers

## **22. National policy changes to enhanced housing benefit scheme**

22.1 Enhanced housing benefit (EHB) is the current means by which landlords' costs in providing intensive housing management are reimbursed. It is paid by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) as an adjunct to Housing Benefit on the request of the local authority. Its value varies significantly. The value of supported housing as an economic option for commissioners depends on the specific accommodation costs being met by the Government.

22.2 EHB will end in March 2019 to be replaced by a grant to councils for it to fund supported housing discretionally. Aspects of the new arrangements will be operative from April 2018. Some form of "golden cut" is expected in early 2018 where future funding is allocated based on current demonstrated need. The quality of data on EHB in Herefordshire is poor.

22.3 There is a significant risk that Herefordshire will be unable to demonstrate its need for supported housing appropriately, leading to an inadequate funding settlement in 2018/19. This could lead to reduced funding of schemes and potential closures and loss of confidence in supported housing among housing developers and providers and the local voluntary sector. This could jeopardise the proposals in this strategy.

22.4 In mitigation, dedicated staffing is being established to collect the necessary data, plan for operation of the new funding scheme and reassure the provider and development markets. Discussions with housing providers are in hand about extending and diversifying the supported housing schemes available and as to how local need for enhanced housing benefit can best be demonstrated.

## **23. Risk to supported housing assets arises where there are contract changes or dispute**

23.1 Such accommodation may be configured in a particular way such as housing "foyers" which can only be replicated or replaced in the long term. Typically, while the actual accommodation sits outside the contract, it is harder to replace than any support and care being commissioned. The risk is particularly in focus around the current SHYPP contract. This has been reviewed and revised thoroughly following the reduction of spending on the service in 2016/17.

23.2 In mitigation, discussions will continue with SHYPP around the future delivery of the service, along with consideration of procurement options. More widely, the council is working with housing providers over the potential to redevelop some old or former sheltered housing schemes for older people. In some instances these might theoretically offer utility in housing care leavers.

## **24. Under utilisation of supported accommodation**

24.1 There is current under utilisation of contracted supported accommodation for learning disabled people, some of which is suitable for transitioning young people. This reflects a number of factors including aligning availability to individual choice, complexity of matching needs and awareness of vacancies among social care and other professionals. Under utilisation leads to unmet need and excess cost in adult social care.

24.2 In mitigation, Adults Wellbeing has reviewed and will continue to monitor vacancies and capacity in contracted supported housing. Dedicated time and knowledge is now being deployed to ensure appropriate review of individual needs and timely matching to vacancies. It is expected that by autumn 2017 numbers of vacancies will be reduced to a minimum, along with reduction of void periods.

## **25. Housing Development system delays**

25.1 Delivering new build housing is a long term and inexact process involving many factors which are mostly outside the council's control. It is common for new housing schemes to be delayed by several months, often after the planning process is concluded.

25.2 Liaison between Planning and Housing Development teams is well practised and the new development relied upon in this strategy is based upon in-depth negotiations with developers and potential providers, However, risk of delay can never be mitigated entirely.

## **26. Procurement of cost effective support for care leavers and UASC**

26.1 UASC numbers in Herefordshire have been insufficient initially to prompt recruitment or commissioning of a dedicated support service. Procurement of support on a spot purchase basis involves very high unit costs and the market for expert support of UASC is presently limited.

26.2 The provision of support of UASC is due for review in summer 2017, to consider commissioning and procurement options including in-house delivery of support. This may be linked to options for support to a wider cohort of care leaver.

## **27. Risk of care leavers becoming homeless**

27.1 In discharging its duty to provide safe and appropriate accommodation for care leavers, the council will ensure that no care leaver is required to make a homelessness application. Whilst the council would remain responsible for accommodating the individual as its corporate parent, a homelessness application can lead to a cycle of instability for individual care leavers and is not appropriate as a pathway into settled accommodation.

27.2 The council's allocation policy reflects the needs of care leavers, identifying them as having a high priority for nomination to housing providers. However accommodating the person in social housing will remain subject to the availability of suitable property and the willingness of providers to take on any perceived risk the young person may present. This is especially true where there is a history of anti-social behaviour and/or risk taking which often reflects a complex situation.

27.3 Over the life of this strategy it is intended to make available sufficient supported and targeted housing to meet the great majority of housing need among care leavers. Such accommodation will be subject to full nomination rights of the council and so fall outside the social housing allocations process.

## 28. National Policy on Affordability of Housing

28.1 From 2019, housing benefit and/or universal credit (UC) will be available for adults aged 21 to 35 only at the rate of a bedsit or room in a shared house. Currently, many vulnerable young adults are housed in 1 bedroom flats which could not be afforded under new arrangements. The groups in focus in this strategy will generally be protected from the effects of this policy until they are 25 by being disabled or care leavers. However, there are long range risks of the security of accommodation after 25, particularly for care leavers. This is exacerbated by the general dearth of bedsits and shared housing in Herefordshire.

28.2 In mitigation, the council is working with developing housing providers to encourage more development or conversion of shared housing in particular. This is likely to bear fruit only in the long term. A new action plan and pathway is to be developed under the Homelessness Prevention Strategy to address the growing risk to younger adults. From April 2017 out of work 18-21 year olds making new claims for UC will no longer be automatically entitled to the housing element (the equivalent of housing benefit). Exemptions will apply for 'vulnerable people'. Entitlement to housing benefit will continue until a person moves onto UC and in cases where a young person is in supported accommodation.



# Part F Management, Implementation and Review

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## **29. Programme management**

A project management approach is to be set up to drive and monitor the implementation of the accommodation strategy. This will involve strategic housing, children's social care and adult social care, along with other stakeholders as appropriate.

## **30. Action planning**

Action to implement the strategy is already well advanced as work has been undertaken since the summer of 2016. Some of this is described in the document itself. A more detailed rolling action plan will be developed as part of the programme management process.

## **31. Engagement, review and evaluation**

There is an evident need to undertake more extensive, wider and continuing consultation and co-production with disabled young people and with care leavers and looked after young people. This will be planned and evaluated through the programme management process.

The strategy sets targets and proposed outcomes and the programme management process will refresh and extend these through the action plan and so monitor and report on progress.

## **32. Governance**

The implementation of the accommodation strategy will be managed by a project group which will monitor progress against agreed outcome measures and project plan. The group will report routinely to the Joint Directorate Leadership Team for adults and wellbeing and children's wellbeing directorates with periodical reporting to the appropriate cabinet members.

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